

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for defining and identifying geographic areas performed by a computer system comprising a processor, a display device, and a memory encoded with program instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to perform the method, the method comprising the steps of:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided into sections that are mutually exclusive;

receiving a query for defining a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections, wherein the indication comprises at least one ~~symbol~~ element that identifies a plurality of subregions or sections having at least one common identifying letter or digit ~~associated with at least one of reducing the number of subregions within the set of subregions, and reducing the number of sections within the set of sections;~~

the processor determining whether the reference to at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be included in the geographic area;

the processor determining whether the reference to the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be excluded from the geographic area; and

outputting, on the display device, a response including information relating to the geographic area wherein the geographic area is representative of the query.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein receiving a query includes:

incorporating in the query a plus sign to add at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area; and

incorporating in the query a minus sign to exclude at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein outputting the response on the display device further includes:

incorporating in the response a pictorial diagram of the geographic area; and depicting the subregions and sections that are included in the geographic region

in a different manner than the subregions and sections that are excluded from geographic area.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different color than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

7. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different shading than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

8. (Currently Amended) A method for defining and identifying geographic areas performed by a computer system comprising a processor, a display device, and a memory encoded with program instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to perform the method, the method comprising the steps of:

the processor providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into states, and wherein the states are divided into postal codes;

the processor receiving a query to identify a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of states and a set of postal codes, the indication comprising at least one ~~symbol~~ element that identifies a plurality of states or postal codes having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated with at-

~~least one of reducing the number of states within the set of states, and reducing the number of postal codes within the set of postal codes,~~ and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of states and one of the set of postal codes is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of states or one of the set of postal codes is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

outputting, on the display device, a response including information related to the geographic area wherein the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a plus sign is included in the geographic area and the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a minus sign is excluded from the geographic area.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein postal codes can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

10. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the response includes a pictorial diagram wherein the identified geographic area is viewably different than those states and postal codes that are excluded from the geographic area.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for defining and identifying a geographic area performed by a computer system comprising a processor, a display device, and a

memory encoded with program instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to perform the method, the method comprising the steps of:

the processor providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided sections that are mutually exclusive;

the processor receiving a query to define a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections, the indication comprising at least one ~~symbol~~ element that identifies a plurality of subregions or sections having at least one common identifying letter or digit ~~associated with at least one of reducing the number of subregions within the set of subregions, and reducing the number of sections within the set of sections, and~~ including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions and one of the set of sections is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions or one of the set of sections is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

outputting, on the display device, a pictorial diagram representative of the query wherein the pictorial diagram includes at least part of the region including the defined geographic area wherein the geographic area is viewably different from the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:

a memory having program instructions;

a display screen; and

a processor responsive to the program instructions to

provide for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided into sections that are mutually exclusive;

receive a query for defining a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections, the indication comprising at least one symbol element that identifies a plurality of subregions or sections having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated with at least one of reducing the number of subregions within the set of subregions, and reducing the number of sections within the set of sections;

determine whether the reference to at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be included in the geographic area;

determine whether the reference to the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be excluded from the geographic area; and

output a response including information relating to the geographic area wherein the geographic area is representative of the query.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

16. (Original) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the processor is further configured to:

incorporate in the query a plus sign to add at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area; and

incorporate in the query a minus sign to exclude at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area.

18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the processor is further configured to:

incorporating in the response a pictorial diagram of the geographic area; and
depict the subregions and sections that are included in the geographic region in a different manner than the subregions and sections that are excluded from geographic area.

19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the processor is further configured to denote the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different color than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the processor is further configured to denote the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different shading than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:

a memory having program instructions;

a display screen; and

a processor responsive to the program instructions to

provide for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into states, and wherein the states are divided into postal codes;

receive a query to identify a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of states and a set of postal codes, the indication comprising at least one symbol element that identifies a plurality of states or postal codes having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated with at least one ~~of reducing the number of states within the set of states, and reducing the number of postal codes within the set of postal codes,~~ and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of states and one of the set of postal codes is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of states or one of the set of postal codes is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

output a response including information related to the geographic area wherein the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a plus sign is included in the geographic area and the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a minus sign is excluded from the geographic area.

22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein postal codes can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the response includes a pictorial diagram wherein the identified geographic area is viewably different than those states and postal codes that are excluded from the geographic area.

24. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for defining and identifying a geographic area, comprising:

a memory having program instructions;

a display screen; and

a processor responsive to the program instructions to

provide for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided sections that are mutually exclusive;

receive a query to define a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections, the indication comprising at least one symbol element that identifies a plurality of subregions or sections having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated with at least one of reducing the number of subregions within the set of subregions, and reducing the

number of sections within the set of sections, and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions and one of the set of sections is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions or one of the set of sections is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

output a pictorial diagram representative of the query wherein the pictorial diagram includes at least part of the region including the defined geographic area wherein the geographic area is viewably different from the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

25. (Original) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

26. (Original) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

27. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium having executable instructions stored thereon, the executable instructions causing a computer to perform steps for defining and identifying geographic areas comprising:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided into sections that are mutually exclusive;

receiving a query for defining a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections, the indication comprising at least one ~~symbol~~ element that identifies a plurality of subregions or sections having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated with at least one of reducing the number of subregions within the set of subregions, and reducing the number of sections within the set of sections;

determining whether the reference to at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be included in the geographic area;

determining whether the reference to the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be excluded from the geographic area; and

outputting a response including information relating to the geographic area wherein the geographic area is representative of the query.

28. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 27, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

29. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 28, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

30. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 27, wherein receiving a query includes:

incorporating in the query a plus sign to add at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area; and

incorporating in the query a minus sign to exclude at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area.

31. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 27, wherein outputting the response further includes:

incorporating in the response a pictorial diagram of the geographic area; and
depicting the subregions and sections that are included in the geographic region in a different manner than the subregions and sections that are excluded from geographic area.

32. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different color than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

33. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different shading than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

34. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium containing executable instructions stored thereon, the executable instructions causing a computer to perform steps for defining and identifying geographic areas, comprising:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into states, and wherein the states are divided into postal codes;

receiving a query to identify a geographic area wherein the query comprising an indication of at least one of a set of states and a set of postal codes, the indication comprising at least one ~~symbol~~ element that identifies a plurality of states or postal codes having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated with at least one ~~of reducing the number of states within the set of states, and reducing the number of postal codes within the set of postal codes,~~ and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of states and one of the set of postal codes is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of states or one of the set of postal codes is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

outputting a response including information related to the geographic area wherein the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a plus sign is included in the geographic area and the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a minus sign is excluded from the geographic area.

35. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 34, wherein postal codes can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

36. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 34, wherein the response includes a pictorial diagram wherein the identified geographic area is viewably different than those states and postal codes that are excluded from the geographic area.

37. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium containing executable instructions stored thereon, the executable instructions causing the computer to perform steps for defining and identifying a geographic area, comprising:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided sections that are mutually exclusive;

receiving a query to define a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections, the indication comprising at least one ~~symbol~~ element that identifies a plurality of subregions or

~~sections having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated with at least one of reducing the number of subregions within the set of subregions, and reducing the number of sections within the set of sections, and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions and one of the set of sections is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions or one of the set of sections is to be excluded from the geographic region; and~~

outputting a pictorial diagram representative of the query wherein the pictorial diagram includes at least part of the region including the defined geographic area wherein the geographic area is viewably different from the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

38. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 37, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

39. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 38, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

40. (Currently Amended) A system for defining and identifying geographic areas, the system comprising:

one or more processors;

a memory storing one or more software modules which, when executed by the one or more processors, perform the steps of:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided into sections that are mutually exclusive;

receiving a query for defining a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections, the indication comprising at least one ~~symbol~~ element that identifies a plurality of subregions or sections having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated with at least one of reducing the number of subregions within the set of subregions, and reducing the number of sections within the set of sections;

determining whether the reference to at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be included in the geographic area; and

determining whether the reference to the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections indicates the at least one of the set of subregions and the set of sections are to be excluded from the geographic area; and

a display device for outputting a response including information relating to the geographic area wherein the geographic area is representative of the query.

41. (Original) The system of claim 40, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

42. (Original) The system of claim 41, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

43. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40, wherein receiving a query includes:

incorporating in the query a plus sign to add at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area; and

incorporating in the query a minus sign to exclude at least one of a subregion contained in the set of subregions and a section contained in the set of sections to the geographic area.

44. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40, wherein outputting the response further includes:

incorporating in the response a pictorial diagram of the geographic area; and

depicting the subregions and sections that are included in the geographic region in a different manner than the subregions and sections that are excluded from geographic area.

45. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 44, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different color than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

46. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 44, wherein depicting the subregions and sections further includes denoting the subregions and sections included in the geographic area in a different shading than the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

47. (Currently Amended) A system for defining and identifying geographic areas, the system comprising:

one or more processors;

a memory storing one or more software modules which, when executed by the one or more processors, perform the steps of:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into states, and wherein the states are divided into postal codes; and

receiving a query to identify a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of states and a set of postal codes, the indication comprising at least one symbol element that identifies a plurality of states or postal codes having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated with at

~~least one of reducing the number of states within the set of states, and reducing the number of postal codes within the set of postal codes,~~ and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of states and one of the set of postal codes is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of states or one of the set of postal codes is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

a display device for outputting a response including information related to the geographic area wherein the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a plus sign is included in the geographic area and the at least one of the set of states and the set of postal codes preceded with a minus sign is excluded from the geographic area.

48. (Original) The system of claim 47, wherein postal codes can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.

49. (Original) The system of claim 47, wherein the response includes a pictorial diagram wherein the identified geographic area is viewably different than those states and postal codes that are excluded from the geographic area.

50. (Currently Amended) A system for defining and identifying a geographic area, the system comprising:

one or more processors;

a memory storing one or more software modules which, when executed by the one or more processors, perform the steps of:

providing for a geographic region wherein the geographic region is divided into subregions that are mutually exclusive, and wherein the subregions are divided sections that are mutually exclusive; and

receiving a query to define a geographic area wherein the query comprises an indication of at least one of a set of subregions and a set of sections, the indication comprising at least one ~~symbol~~ element that identifies a plurality of subregions or sections having at least one common identifying letter or digit associated ~~with at least one of reducing the number of subregions within the set of subregions, and reducing the number of sections within the set of sections,~~ and including in the query at least one of a plus sign and a minus sign, wherein the plus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions and one of the set of sections is to be included in the geographic area and a minus sign is included when at least one of the set of subregions or one of the set of sections is to be excluded from the geographic region; and

a display device for outputting a pictorial diagram representative of the query wherein the pictorial diagram includes at least part of the region including the defined geographic area wherein the geographic area is viewably different from the subregions and sections that are excluded from the geographic area.

51. (Original) The system of claim 50, wherein the subregions are states and the sections are postal codes.

52. (Original) The system of claim 51, wherein sections can be identified by at least one number included in the postal code, starting with the first number of the postal code.